

State of California
Business Transportation and Housing Agency
Department of Transportation

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PROGRAM STATUS
Status of Local Assistance Manual Update
Information Item

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Original Signed By

W. J. EVANS, Deputy Director
Finance
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STATUS OF EFFORTS TO UPDATE LOCAL ASSISTANCE MANUAL

SUMMARY

This Update provides information on the Local Assistance Procedures Manual purpose, background, existing features, summary of actions taken to date, and current and future efforts.

PURPOSE:

The *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* is used to provide an acceptable practice for complying with both state and federal legislation and regulation. The manual has been prepared to aid California local agencies to scope, organize, design, construct and maintain their public transportation facilities when they seek Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funded Federal-aid or State funding. The manual describes the established processes, procedures, documents, authorizations, approvals and certifications which are required in order to receive Federal-aid and/or State funds for many types of local transportation projects.

BACKGROUND:

The first edition of *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* was issued on February 1, 1998 in both hard copy and an electronic version. The manual is a compilation and summary of information from many sources including Federal and State law, regulations, guidelines and operating practices. It reflects the procedures and practices developed over many years of providing Federal-aid funding and State funding for local projects. These practices and procedures have been modified many times, most recently for changes made by the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), SB 45 (state legislation passed in 1998), 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), SB 300/AB 471 (the 1989 State transportation blueprint legislation), and the 1995 Caltrans reengineering of the local assistance procedures. The general thrust of the changes under the above legislation and reengineering has been to provide the local agency with broad delegation, latitude and responsibility for developing its projects. However, under Title 23, United States Code, Caltrans is responsible for the administration of Federal-aid (FHWA funded) transportation projects in California, and cannot delegate this overall administrative responsibility. All procedures are reviewed and approved by applicable state and federal agencies and are issued by either a manual change transmittal letter or by Local Programs Procedures (LPPs). LPPs are used for rapid deployment of new procedures that would normally be issued in manual updates. All LPPs will eventually be included in manual updates or new editions. In addition to the *Local Assistance Procedures Manual*, special **guidebooks** have been published in the

past on topics such as Seismic Retrofit, Emergency Relief, Right of Way, etc. to provide an executive summary of information contained in the procedures or guidelines manuals.

EXISTING FEATURES that make the manual user-friendly:

- The *Manual* is now available on the Internet in two user-friendly common formats for viewing or downloading at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/>
 1. Available in Adobe Acrobat for entire manual or separate chapters. Forms included in the manual are now provided in user friendly electronic formats for local agencies and are accessible on the Internet.
 2. Available in Microsoft Word with electronic forms so that an agency can alter text if necessary
- Hardcopies are available (and in high demand) through Caltrans Publications – phone number is on inside cover and on our web site
- Local Programs Procedures (LPPs) update procedures in the manual – these are sent out to everyone whom has purchased a manual since its inception unless owners indicated they not receive them. (Records are kept of which manuals an agency purchases, and how many they purchase.) These LPPs are also posted on the web and can also be electronically subscribed to by following the instructions on the Caltrans Office of Local Programs home page:
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/> under update notification.
- A helpful Index
- All exhibits are referenced and explained within their own specific chapter (at a minimum)
- Table of Contents gives general chapter titles, and the “Contents” page at the beginning of each chapter goes into further detail about the contents of that chapter
- References are listed at the end of each chapter body (before the exhibits)
- Format is easily read
 1. Right and left justified is pleasing to the eye
 2. Written in third person, so as not to confuse any specific audience

CURRENT EFFORTS:

- The Department is continuously updating the *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* to include guidance on recent State legislation and Federal regulation updates and changes. These updates remain the department’s number one priority to our manual. Feedback received from our focus group that is looking at ways to improve our product supports this effort.
- Process reviews are conducted to identify improvements and simplify procedures.
- The Standard Environmental Reference is under development and will aid agencies by linking to various resource agency policy and procedures electronically and allowing easy access to up to date information and instruction to complete the environmental process for all projects.
- Streamlining and user friendly efforts are underway in some areas of the manual such as accounting and pre-award audits. The new accounting chapter includes indirect costs as an eligible expense for federal-aid reimbursement and user friendly sample invoices.
- Continuous External input – Example: The Department utilized external participation on the pre-award audit task force from members of the City/County Cooperative Committee. These members are representatives selected by both the League of California Cities and County Engineers Association of California (CEAC).

Below is an estimated timetable (total 18 months) for completion of a more concise, user-friendly local assistance manual:

1. Complete scheduled updates i.e. (Rights & DBE chapter, metric update, pre-award audits, rewrite of Chapter 6, "Environmental Procedures," reimbursed and enhanced services procedures, new local agency STIP projects chapter 23 (including, AB 872 procedures & PSR guidelines, and AB 1012 requirements) – (6 months).
2. Dedicate staff/consultant to identify scope, schedule, and establish resources needed, and to manage effort for completion of recommendations received from the established **focus group and out reach to external users** – (6 months effort parallel with #1) A focus group has been established to review and recommend changes to the first edition of the *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* (1998). This group is gathering information from internal and external sources to determine the scope for a user-friendly manual. Areas of review may include items such as:
 - A business practice review for further streamlining opportunities
 - Review of other manuals and what other states have produced
 - New technology applications
 - Reach out effort to local agencies and the districts
3. Draft new edition of user friendly *Local Assistance Procedures Manual* incorporating all previous LPP's – (4 months)
4. Standard Circulation of draft to staff and clients for comment and revise draft including suggestions and corrections. – (3 months)
5. Final editing, Department and FHWA approval, printing, distribution and posting electronic version – (4 months)
6. Provide district orientation training – (1 month)
7. Start preparation of a new set of **Guidebooks** that provide brief overviews, summarize programs and topics, and outline processes. Guidebooks will summarize and highlight key information about particular programs, guidelines or procedures. These publications will brief agencies of the opportunities of particular programs and provide an executive summary of the process with reference to a detailed set of procedures or guidelines. – (**continuous with some effort parallel to all of the above**)

FUTURE EFFORTS for providing improved products:

- A business process review is planned to evaluate the way Local Programs conducts its business with a focus on identifying improvements.

The Department will continue to include external agency members to develop and assist with streamlining the procedures for delivering local agency projects.